

Application No.: 10/560,523**Docket No.: 4976-008****REMARKS**

The claims have been amended for clarity. Claims 23-26 are added to provide applicants with the protection to which they are deemed entitled. Thus, the amended independent claims now require at least two local terminals, close to one another, and indicate there is a dedicated coupling between these local devices. The independent claims also require the signal emitted by a loud-speaker of a first device to be picked up by a microphone of a second device located close to the first device.

The added terms in the amended independent and newly added claims are supported, inter alia, by Figs. 1 and 9 and the description thereof, as well as the indication in paragraph 0084 of the application as published that communication devices 10 are in the same premises and the statement in paragraphs 0076-0078 that sound waves have paths 61-64 between the loudspeakers and microphones of the various communication devices. The requirement for the electric wave of new claims 23-26 is found, inter alia, in paragraphs 0071 and 0209 of the published application. The terminology "electric wave component" is broad enough to cover electric transmission through wires, and electromagnetic transmission by radio and light waves.

The amended claims obviate the rejections of (1) claims 6, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22 as being anticipated by Finn et al., US Patent 6,496,581, (2) claims 1-5, 8, 12-17 and 20-22 as being obvious over Finn et al., in view of Boland, US Patent Publication 2003/0123674, and (3) claims 9 and 18 as being obvious over Finn et al., in view of Boland and Janse et al., US Patent Publication 2003/0026437.

In Finn et al., each loudspeaker of a zone (there are two distinct zones) reproduces the voice of a person present in the other zone. Finn et al. does not concern echo processing between close, acoustically coupled communication devices.

Finn et al. also does not disclose receiving information representative of the signal broadcast by a loudspeaker of another communication device as required by all the independent claims. Finn et al. also does not disclose the requirement of independent claims 1 and 12 for modifying the signal picked up by at least one loudspeaker of at least one other communication device and for weighting the broadcast

Application No.: 10/560,523**Docket No.: 4976-008**

signal by a coefficient representing coupling between one or more loudspeakers of at least one other communication device from one or more microphones of the communication device.

The secondary references fail to cure the foregoing deficiencies in Finn et al. Boland is concerned with reducing or eliminating undesirable acoustic echo coupling between a speaker and a microphone of a single near-end device 200 responsive to a received far-end signal that is apparently emitted by a device that is remote from device 200.

Janse et al. is concerned with a sound reinforcement system having a multi-microphone echo suppressor as a post processor. Speakers 3 respond to beam former 10 to radiate sound into a room. Microphones 2 pick up the reflected sound and drive adaptive filter 4 that tries to "whiten" the desired signal in response to the signal which drives the microphones. Outputs of filter 4 are combined by microphone beam former 5 that drives DES/DENS 7 for suppressing echoes and noise in the microphone beam derived by the beam former. The output of DES/DENS 7 is applied, via limiter 10, to frequency shift decorrelator 9, which in turn drives speakers 3. Thus, Janse et al., in essence, is also a single device that is not responsive to the outputs of loudspeakers and microphones of other devices.

Since none of the applied references discloses the foregoing features of amended independent claims 1, 6, 12 or 15, the independent claims are allowable. Dependent claims 2-5, 7-11, 12, 14 and 16 are allowable with the claims upon which they depend.

Allowance is in order.

Application No.: 10/560,523

Docket No.: 4976-008

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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